

Stress Management Practices Adopted by Career Women in Imo State

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Abstract

The major purpose of this study was to investigate the three tiers of stress management practices adopted by career women in Imo State. It also identified the constraints to effective management practices and various ways stress could be enhanced. Three research questions and two hypotheses tested at 0.05 level of significance guided the study. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The study was carried out in the three senatorial zones of Imo State of Nigeria. The population for the study comprised of all the career women in the area of study while the sample size was 180 career women drawn from the population. Structured questionnaire and focus group discussion (FGD) were the instrument used for the study. The quantitative data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation while qualitative data were summarized. The test statistics was used for testing the hypotheses at $P < 0.05$ level of significance and 178 degree of freedom. The findings revealed that the three tiers of stress management practices among the career women are the primary, secondary and tertiary practices, the constraints to effective stress management practices and the most appropriate ways of enhancing the management practices by career women. The findings also revealed that the three tiers of stress management practices consists of ten items in primary, five items in secondary and six items in tertiary sum up to the total of twenty-one items. Based on the findings, it was recommended that women should adapt the primary, secondary and tertiary procedures for stress management. Individual should help themselves by throwing off challenges immediately it arises among others.

Keywords: Career Women, Stress, Primary, Secondary, Tertiary, Management Practices.

Introduction

Career women are women or individuals who in addition to their domestic chores also work outside the home as employers or wage earners (Anyakoha, 2013). The career women play the roles of home makers and at

the same time are gainfully employed outside the home wage or income earners (Agulana, 2004). The author continues to describe them as women who have jobs, and continuous developmental characteristics. They are employed as civil servants in

government practitioners or establishment, lecturers, teachers in both public and private schools, nurses in hospitals and medical laboratory workers. These set of individuals are married with families. These women are professionally qualified and have specific career path ahead of them. Nevertheless, as women and in most cases mothers, they still have their statutory roles to play as home makers, motherhood, house wives, community. Organize, social, cultural and political leader (Agulanna, 2010). At the work place, her roles may include administrative, supervisory, managerial and leadership among others. Agulanna (2004) identified the characteristics of these women include high level of career responsibilities, economic reward, social prestige, personal investment of time and energy, specialized training and a development sequence of activities.

In every society, career women function to ensure that the family performed exceedingly better and in the course of executing their function, they inadvertently encounter stress. Such stress may result from their desire to meet the financial, moral and social needs of the home such as searching for employment, attending to children, in-laws and friends (Iheme, 2015). Anyakoha (2013) also affirmed that these women are in dire need of a place to keep their children while at work and during meal preparations which contributes to stress and stress related challenges. The author highlighted the challenges to include the basic need like clothing, food, housing, health care, communication, culture and spiritual which add to the load of the women.

Both in the home and place of employment. Stress is experienced when one is under pressure and feels unable to cope with the situation. Stress is a state that occurs when an individual perceives events to strain the coping capacities and thereafter, their own wellbeing (Lazarus, 2001). Baron(2000), defines stress as the physical, psychological and behavioral reaction experienced by individuals in situations where they feel that their ability to cope may soon be overwhelmed. It is the physical mental or emotional strain or tension or a condition of feeling experienced when a person perceives that demands a need to personal and social resources. The individual is able to mobilize. Stress is an individual response to change a circumstance or to a threatening situation. It can be viewed as personal reaction to an external event or demand like writing and exam or to an external state of mind, like worrying about an event.

Eckhart (2014) stress tends to increase with the prospect of not being able to cope with the situation at hand. Some stress is desirable while some are detrimental. This stress is simply a by-product of life. Stress is a condition that imposes demand for adjustment in an individual. It is an impressive term which can be explained in terms of three related concepts, namely: anxiety, conflict, and frustration (Melgosa, 2001).Muller and Beleacto in Ekeoma (2004), highlighted on pleasant emotional experience in the home, officers, associated with the element of fear, death, anxiety, anger, annoyance, sadness, depression as part of stressors to career winning. The author states that

stressors are any physical or psychological event or condition that produces stress. Ogbuegbulam (2010), describes stressors as the agent which actually creates stress to the individuals. Stressors are also live events that are also challenging as to potentially be associated with the occurrence of a physiological symptom (Yahads and wrong, 2010). Stressors in the families of career women involves conflict in the family values, conflict misery from house helps, financial management of the home, issues arising from school runs, health care, time management, extended families and communications. Stress has become one of the most serious health issues and a worldwide epidemic (Herbert, 2018).

According to Bouchez (2017) stress accounts for 30% of all infertility problems among women. She maintained that stress can cause the injected sperms in the fallopian tubes and uteruses not to function effectively. The stress hormone control has been found to cause both the accumulation of abdominal fat and enlargement of fat cells causing "diseased fat" (Holman, 2018). Abam (2018) maintained that in chronic stress, dominant hormones are released into the brain, these hormones are released into the brain. These hormones are intended for short-term emergencies and in the event where they exist for extended periods, they impair and kill the brain cells. Thus Tamar (2019) maintained that this can be reduced by laughing which strengthens the immune system through the release of positive hormones.

Stress can be positive (Eustress-good or constructively and negative -

distress (bad or destructive). Eustress (good or constructive is a stress that the body can chemically dissipate without physiological damage and is helpful in moving an individual towards achievement. On the other hand negative (bad) destructive stress is distress and it is what people aim to manage through the use of management. This arises when one's coping skills are inadequate for meeting particular challenges in life (Ahola, 2018). These stressors can be reduced through the practice of stress management.

Therefore, stress management is the process of learning to appreciate how the body resists to pressure and how to develop skills which enhance the bodies adjustment (Klinic, 2010). Stress management are the appropriate coping actions behaviours or attitude which humans exhibit when faced with certain physiological, psychological and social demands that task their adaptive resources (Ogbuegbulam, 2010). Stress management is beneficial to reduce blood pressure, heart disease, digestive troubles, and many more physical alignments. It also helps improve sleep, mental health, cognition and libido (Eckhart, 2014). Misamari, (2002) narrowed management into three major groups for career women such as primary, secondary and tertiary management practice.

Primary management include end optimism, time management, leisure time activities or change the source of stress. Time management as one of the principles of practices is that which enables females to minimize the stress of work overload and to prioritize work

and leisure activities. Leisure activities include cleaning the house, hiring of wears, watching films and listening to news, etc.

Secondary management practices, involves such as physical exercises, relaxation, training and taking proper diet. Relaxation according to Muker (1996) and Marisamari (2002) is made up of four components namely; a quiet environment, a mental device such as words and sound, a passive attitude by a non-critically pushing aside destructive thoughts and a comfortable position. This could control the emotional consequences of stress.

Tertiary practices include, communication barriers and seeking professional help (Wilson and Qukek in Ekeoma, 2004). In all Marisamari (2002) opined changing the mind set or perception of thoughts about stressors as a therapy to stress. Melgosa and Girossof (2001) maintained that women could seek professional advice or change their jobs where their career are very stressful. Other practices include controlling the environment which involves avoiding noising surrounding, living in a space reasonably large and clean and giving enough time for children. He also concluded by saying positive thinking and sharing talent with others goes a long way in reducing stress. It is against this background that this study embarks upon to suggest the three tiers of stress management practices adopted by career women in Imo state.

Objectives of the Study

The specific purpose was to:

1. Identify the primary stress management practices that could be adopted by career women in Imo State.
2. Identify the secondary stress management practices that could be adopted by career women in Imo State.
3. Identify the tertiary stress management practices that could be adopted by career women in Imo State.
4. Identify the constraints to effective stress management of career women in Imo State, Nigeria.
5. Identify ways of enhancing the stress management of career women in Imo state Nigeria

Research Questions

1. What are the primary stress management practices adopted by career women in Imo State?
2. What are they secondary stress management practices adopted by career women in Imo State?
3. What are the tertiary stress management practices adopted by career women in Imo State?
4. Identify the constraint to effective stress management among career women in Imo State?
5. Identify ways of enhancing the stress management of career women in Imo State, Nigeria?

Hypothesis

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of women in the rural and urban areas of Imo State on the primary, secondary

and tertiary management practices of stress.

H0₂: There is no significant difference in the mean rating of women in the urban/rural areas on constraints in management of stress by career women in Imo State.

H0₃: There is no significant difference in the mean rating of women in the rural/urban areas on the ways of enhancing stress management by career women in Imo State.

Methodology

Research Designs: The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. Survey research typically employ interview and questionnaire to determine the opinions, perceptions and attitudes of people about issues. This study adopted this design since it sought the opinion of career women of stress management.

Area of the Study: The study was carried out in Imo State in South-East, Nigeria. The area covered women who plays the role of a homemaker and employees of other works outside as salary earners in places like colleges of education, universities, primary and secondary schools, hospitals, and entrepreneurs.

Population for the Study: The population comprised of 2983 respondents that comprised the following groups, civil servants, doctors, nurses, lecturers, medical laboratories, teachers and entrepreneurs. The population of the career women based on the area of study comprised of 60 women from

each senatorial zone namely; Owerri, Okigwe and Orlu, making a total of 180. The population also included focused group decision existing in the same state.

Instrument for Data Collection:

Questionnaire was used for data collection. The questionnaire consisted of two sections; section i and section ii. Section i provided demographic information of the respondent while section ii was made up of 5 clusters according to the research questions. Responses to the items in the questionnaire, were based on a 4 point likert type rating scale, ranging from strongly agree (SA) (4 points), agree (A) (3 points), disagree (D) (2 points) and strongly disagree (SD) (1 point). The focus group decision guide used for qualitative data for the study, centered on 5 points that bordered on stress management practiced of career women.

The instrument was duly validated by three experts (2 from the department of vocational and technical education, university of Nigeria, Nsukka and one from the health council unit of the department of natural science and a medical doctor in Umuzuruike hospital, Owerri, Imo state). The liability of the instrument was ascertained using Cronbach Alpha. A reliability coefficient of 0.90 was established using signified very high reliability of the instrument.

Data Collection Method: Direct method was applied by the researcher and one research assistant in distributing and collecting the questionnaire from the respondent. The research assistant was briefed on the modalities for

distributing and collecting the questionnaire from the respondent. 180 copies was distributed and returned. The FGD was organized by the researcher with the assistance of one moderator with questions that bordered on issues relating to stress.

Data Analysis Techniques: Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were used for data analysis. A mean of 2.50 was used as the bench mark for decision making for each item, since a 4-point rating scale was used for the study. Thus any item with a mean of 2.50 and above was considered as accepted by the respondents, while any

item below 2.50 was considered as unaccepted by the respondents

T-test was used to test the hypothesis of 0.05 level of significance. The data from FGD was summarized. All computations were carried out using the statistical package for social science (SPSS).

Results

Research Question 1

What are the primary, secondary and tertiary stress management adopted by career women in Imo State?

Table 1: Stress Management Practices Adopted by Career Women in Imo State

S/N	Practices	Urban Career		Women	Rural	Career	Women
	Primary management procedures for stress management	X_u	SD_u	men R_u	X_R	SD_R	R_R
1	Deal positively with the source of stress	3.60	0.80	A	2.60	0.72	Agreed
2	Regular relaxation and exercise	3.40	0.80	A	2.80	0.75	Agreed
3	Engage the same time in closely related activities	3.40	0.80	A	2.67	0.75	Agreed
4	Avoid noisy environments	3.60	0.49	A	2.83	0.64	Agreed
5	Live in a clean environment	3.80	0.40	A	3.07	0.68	Agreed
6	Have enough rest	3.40	0.80	A	2.97	0.66	Agreed
7	Avoid worrying	3.40	0.80	A	3.07	0.58	Agreed
8	Being real in all situation	3.60	0.80	A	3.17	0.46	Agreed
9	Being contented with ones possessions	3.40	0.80	A	3.07	0.58	Agreed
10	Managing family resources properly	3.80	0.40	A	3.10	0.65	Agreed
	Secondary stress management practices						Agreed
11	Regular relaxation and exercise	3.60	0.80	A	3.20	0.60	Agreed
12	Eat adequate or proper diet	3.60	0.49	A	3.23	0.72	Agreed
13	Taking work outside the environment	3.20	0.40	A	3.03	0.48	Agreed
14	Mixing up with pair, friends and colleagues	3.60	0.49	A	3.03	0.61	Agreed
	Tertiary stress management practices						Agreed

15	Socializing yourself with others	3.40	0.49	A	3.03	0.76	Agreed
16	Sharing your wealth and talent with others	3.60	0.49	A	3.03	0.71	Agreed
17	Share joys and sorrows with family members	3.40	0.49	A	3.07	0.58	Agreed
18	Adapt a problem solving attitude in life	3.40	0.49	A	3.17	0.64	Agreed
19	Seek professional guidance for serious problems	3.80	0.40	A	3.13	0.72	Agreed
20	Have a positive happy attitude towards life	3.80	0.40	A	3.07	0.63	Agreed
Grand mean		3.47			3.02		Agreed

NB: A= agree; D= disagree; X_u = mean rating of urban career women; SD_u = standard deviation score of urban career women; R_u = remark for urban career women; X_R = mean rating of rural career women; SD_R = standard deviation score of urban career women; R_R = remark for rural career women

Table 1 above shows that both career women (urban and rural) mean ratings of primary, secondary and tertiary stress management practices utilized by them. For item 1-20 were within 2.5-3.47 mean limit set for agree. This means that primary stress management practices utilized by career women are deal positively with the source of stress, regular relaxation and exercise engage the same time in closely related activities avoid noisy environment, live in a clean environment, have enough rest, avoid worrying; being real in all situation, being contented with ones possessions, and managing family resources properly while the secondary stress management practices utilized by career women are regular relaxation and exercise, eat adequate or proper diet, taking work outside the environment, and mixing up with peer, friends and colleagues.

Finally, the tertiary stress management practices utilized by career women in the state are socializing yourself with others, share your wealth and talents with others, share joys and solving attitude in life, seek professional guidance for serious problems, and have a positive happy attitude towards life (0.40). This implies that the above mentioned points are effective in the management of stress by career women. This is in line with the findings of Denga and Ekpo in Ekeoma (2004) who advised that women should crack jokes from time to time to avoid antidote for sadism and negativism.

Research Question Two: What are the constraints to effective or proper stress management practices to career women in Imo State?

Table 2: Constraints to Effective or proper Stress Management Practices to Career Women in Imo State

Constraints for Effective Stress Urban Career Women Rural Career women Management by Career Women		X_u	SD_u	R_u	X_R	sd_r	R
S/ N				A			
1	Uncompromising attitude of family	3.60	0.49		3.00	0.64	Agreed
2	Poverty and economics crises in the family	3.80	0.40	A	3.00	0.73	Agreed
3	Time factor (insufficient time)	3.60	0.49	A	2.87	0.81	Agreed
4	Other crowded schedules	3.60	0.49	A	2.87	0.77	Agreed
5	Socio-economic status of the family	3.60	0.49	A	2.67	0.79	Agreed
6	Use of crude method or equipment for cooking food	3.20	0.75	A	2.70	0.83	Agreed
7	Dual career women's	3.20	0.40	A	2.50	0.62	Agreed
8	Boredom after the day's work	3.40	0.49	A	2.53	0.77	Agreed
9	Attitudes of the boss and spouse	3.20	0.40	A	2.60	0.76	Agreed
10	Religious factor	3.00	0.64	A	2.63	0.77	Agreed
11	Cultural heritage of the community	3.00	0.64	A	2.60	0.80	Agreed
12	Lack of co-operation from the family	3.80	0.40	A	2.77	0.85	Agreed
Grand Mean		3.36			2.73		

NB: A = Agree; D= Disagree; X_u= Mean rating of urban career women; SD_u= Standard Deviation score of urban career women; R_u= Remark for urban career women; X_R= Mean rating of rural career women; SD_R= Standard Deviation score of urban career women; R_r= Remark for rural career women

Table 2 presented the constraints faced by the career women to effective stress management practices. It revealed that lack of cooperation from the family members (0.85) was the most severe constraint, followed by use of crude method or equipment for cooking (0.83), time factor (0.81). other constraints to the proper stress management include cultural heritage of the community (0.80), Religions factor (0.80), socio-economic factor (0.79), crowded schedules (0.77), attitudes of the boss and spouse (0.76), poverty and

economics crises in the family (0.73), uncompromising attitude of family members (0.64) and women's resistance to change (0.62). This implies that lack of co-operation and use of crude method or equipment for cooking and others were the major constraints to the effective management of stress by career women in Imo State. Thus all fall within the mean limit set for agreed (2.5-3.49).

Research Question 3: In what ways can stress management practices of the career women be enhanced?

Table 3: Ways of enhancing stress management practices of the career women in Imo State

S/N	Ways of Enhancing Stress Management Career Women	Urban Women		Career	Rural Career Women		
		X _u	SD _u	R _u	X _R	SD _R	R _R
1.	Thinking positively	3.80	0.40	A	2.83	0.64	Agreed
2.	Change your emotional response	3.60	0.49	A	2.90	0.70	Agreed
3.	Embrace spiritually	3.80	0.49	A	2.93	0.63	Agreed
4.	Protect your time	3.60	0.49	A	3.00	0.58	Agreed
5.	Learn how to take time for yourself without feeling guilty	3.60	0.49	A	2.93	0.51	Agreed
6.	Restore work life balance	3.40	0.49	A	2.93	0.51	Agreed
7.	Try meditation	3.40	0.49	A	3.08	0.78	Agreed
8.	Maintain a strong social network	3.40	0.49	A	2.97	0.61	Agreed
9.	Consult experts in difficult situation	3.80	0.40	A	2.90	0.75	Agreed
	Grand Mean	3.52			2.94		

NB: A = Agree; D= Disagree; X_u= Mean rating of urban career women; SD_u= Standard Deviation score of urban career women; R_u= Remark for urban career women; X_R= Mean rating of rural career women; SD_R= i Standard Deviation score of urban career women; R_r= Remark for rural career women

Results of analysis as shown on Table 3 reveals the various ways stress management practices can be enhanced for the benefit of the career women. It revealed that trying mediation (0.78) was the most powerful skill for enhancing stress management, followed by consulting experts in difficult situation (0.75), change your emotional response (0.70), thinking positively (0.61), embrace spiritually (0.63), maintaining a strong social network (0.61), protecting the time and taking time for oneself without feeling guilty (0.58) and restore work life balance (0.51). This implies that all the above

mentioned can assist in improving stress among the career women as they are within the mean limit of 2.5 and above which is the acceptable mean rate.

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of women in the rural and urban areas of Imo State on the primary, secondary and tertiary stress management practices utilized by career women in Imo State.

The data for testing hypothesis three are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: t-test of Independent showing Mean and Standard Deviation Ratings of Women in the Rural and Urban Areas of Imo state on the Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Stress Management Practices utilized by Career Women in Imo State.

	Grouping	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
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Overall	Urban	90	3.27	0.50				
	Rural	90	3.02	0.28	7.48	178	0.00	S

NB: S = Significant; t = t-test calculated; df = Degree of Freedom; and N= Number of Respondents

Table 4 indicates that the calculated value of t (7.48) has a probability "value (0.00) which is less than 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative upheld. Hence, significant difference exist in the mean ratings of women in the rural and urban areas of Imo state on the primary, secondary and tertiary stress management practices utilized by career women in Imo State in favor of career

women in the urban with high mean score of 3.47.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of women in the rural and urban areas of Imo State on the constraints to effective or proper stress management practices to career women in Imo State.

The data for testing hypothesis two are presented in Table 5

Table 5: t-test of Independent showing Mean and Standard Deviation Ratings of Women in the Rural and Urban Areas of Imo state on the Constraints to effective or proper Stress Management Practices to Career Women in Imo State

	Grouping	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
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Overall	Urban	90	3.36	0.38				
	Rural	90	2.73	0.54	8.99	178	0.00	S

NB: S = Significant; t = t-test calculated; df = Degree of Freedom; and N= Number of Respondents

Table 5 above indicates that the calculated value of t (8.99) has a probability value (0.00) which is less than 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative upheld, hence, significant difference exist in the mean ratings of

women in the rural and urban areas of Imo state on the constraints to effective or proper stress management practices to career women in Imo State in favor of career women in the urban with high mean score of 3.36.

Hypothesis 3

There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of women in the rural and urban areas of imp state on the ways of

stress management practices of the career women can be enhanced.

The data for testing hypothesis three are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: t-test of Independent showing Mean and Standard Deviation Ratings of Women in the Rural and Urban Areas of Imo state on ways stress management practices of the career women be enhanced

	Grouping	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Overall	Urban	90	3.52	0.42				
	Rural	90	2.94	0.41	9.33	178	0.00	S

NB: S = Significant; t = t-test calculated; df = Degree of Freedom; and N= Number of Respondents

Table 6 above indicates that the calculated value of t (9.33) has a probability value (0.00) which is less than 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative upheld. Hence, significant difference exist in the mean ratings of women in the rural and urban areas of Imo state on the ways stress management practices of the career women can be enhanced in favor of career women in the urban with high mean score of 3.52.

Discussion

findings equally show that primary stress management practices utilized by career women include regular relaxation and exercise, engage the same time in closely related activities, avoid noisy environment and others, while the secondary stress management practices utilized by career women are eating adequate or proper diet, taking work outside the environment and mixing up with peer, friends and colleagues and tertiary stress

management practices utilized by career women in the state are socializing oneself with others; sharing ones wealth and talents with others. The findings were in line with the view of Dengs and Ekpo in Ekeoma (2004) who advised that women should crack jokes from time to time to avoid antidote for sadism and negativism (Habibi, 2015). Also, Ngoka (2000), concluded that laughter is a stress management practice and refers to it as approaches to cognitive and psychological activities of handling stress. These findings were in agreement with the observation of Stephens in Agulanna (2009) who said that social support provided by other people in time of need goes a long way in stress management. The findings were also in consonance with the submission of Taylor and Aspinwa in (Agulanna, 2007) who posted that social support can be seen in three angles namely emotional, tangible and information.

Similarly, findings revealed also that the constraints to effective or proper

stress management practices to career women are uncompromising attitude of family members, poverty and economic crises in the family, time factor (insufficient time) among others (Khalatbai, 2011). Also, findings showed that the ways stress management practices of the career women can be enhanced are by thinking positively; changing ones' emotional response, embracing spirituality and others (Rosemary, 2014).

Finally, the supportive hypotheses revealed that significant difference exist in the mean ratings of urban and rural career women in the three tiers procedure for stress management (Alari, 2012). The implication of this finding is that the procedure for managing stress is in favour of urban women. Also, there was a significant difference in the ways of enhancing stress among career women (Habibi, 2015). The implication is that the ways for enhancing stress significantly influence the urban women. These findings were in conformity with the assertion of Soegal (2011) who said that women should try to be flexible, discard negative beliefs and learn to talk in a positive ways. Also, the findings of this study agreed with the findings of Ugoji (2009) who found that mixing leisure with work helps in management of stress among individuals in corporate organization (career women). This in turn will help promote career-women health and increase productivity and healthy families.

Thus, it was observed that there was a significant difference in the procedures for stress management practices among the urban and rural

career women. The implication of this findings is that the procedures for managing stress in favour of the urban women. Also, there was a significant difference in the ways of enhancing stress among career women. The implication is that the ways of enhancing stress significantly influence the urban women.

Conclusion

The three tiers of stress management practices (primary, secondary, tertiary practices) adopted by career women ensure that every career woman is able to live a fulfilled life and work to the fullest potential. Hence the management of stress with regard to the three practices should be encouraged and accepted by all and sundry in the society to enable the career women actualize a healthy living.

Recommendations

1. Career women should adopt primary, secondary and tertiary procedure for stress management shown in the study.
2. Welfare officers should adopt the findings of the study on procedures and ways of managing stress among career women for use during counselling on health related issues among career women
3. Stress related issues and its manifestation among career women should be handled as location dependent factors by welfare officers.

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